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Oyster Storytelling Yoga

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Oyster Storytelling Yoga

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Violette Gibbs, Instructor of Yoga (Yoga Alliance: E-RYT200)
Roel Fleuren, Science Transmitter

Storytelling is an art form in which the presenter persuasively engages an audience and evokes a collective passionate response in return. Yoga is a very different art form in which the participants reflect on their personal well-being and the well-being of the world through controlled breathing, guided movements, and affirmations. Walters participated in a storytelling yoga class in which the presenter kept her audience motivated by interspersing Irish folktales into the routine. Everyone in the class was captivated by the combination of storytelling and yoga. Walters, a marine biologist, soon thereafter asked her former student/current yoga instructor and friend Violette Gibbs to collaborate on a routine to combine the benefits of yoga with a story about the biodiversity and importance of our estuaries and oyster reefs. Thus, oyster storytelling yoga was born!

In this package, you will find 18 cards, each with a story of an important estuarine organism or process complimented by a unique yoga pose and step-by-step instructions on how you and your students get to each pose. Some of the poses are traditional (e.g. tree pose), while others were created just for this collection. Below is a suggested sequence of organisms, but feel free to pick and choose whatever works best for you. If you plan to use the cards on a regular basis, please consider laminating them. There are no age limits with oyster storytelling yoga – we have tested it with groups as young as 4 years old through senior citizens. All gained from the experience and had fun. We hope you enjoy oyster storytelling yoga as much as we have enjoyed developing it with funding from the National Science Foundation (#1617374).

Any questions/comments, please contact Linda.Walters@ucf.edu.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Calm Water Pose (seated pose) | 10. Manatee Pose (bow pose) |
| 2. Mosquito Breath (controlled breathing) | 11. Oyster Pose (original for project) |
| 3. Waves of Water Pose (cat and cow pose) | 12. Crab Pose (yogi squat) |
| 4. Shell Midden Pose (mountain pose) | 13. Great Blue Heron Pose (warrior III) |
| 5. Red Mangrove Pose (tree pose) | 14. Seagrass Pose (forward fold pose) |
| 6. Marshgrass Pose (half-moon pose) | 15. Shrimp Pose (eagle pose) |
| 7. Boat Pose (boat pose) | 16. Redfish Pose (fish pose) |
| 8. Brown Pelican Pose (swan dive pose) | 17. Bull Shark Pose (original for project) |
| 9. Dolphin Pose (dolphin pose) | 18. Sleeping Starfish Pose (corpse pose) |

*This project is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Deirdre Englehart -
an extraordinary educator who used storytelling and yoga to help
children learn and become better citizens of the world.*



Calm Water Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Estuaries are amazing places where freshwater and saltwater mix, resulting in water that is somewhat salty (brackish). This location is home to hundreds of species of plants and animals, many of which are only found in estuaries. Some of these organisms live in the water and some live on the shore, some live in the trees, and some live in the breeze. Let's start by becoming the calm water of our estuary. It is important to start every yoga routine with centering the mind and warming up the body. We will end each pose with an affirmation. Affirmations are positive thoughts to help us direct our thinking.

Let's begin our oyster yoga routine now!



1.

Come to a comfortable seat, cross your legs and sit up tall.



2.

Close your eyes and breathe slowly. Place your hands on your knees.



3.

Gently lean your body to the right and then to the left. Repeat 4-6 times (teachers counts out loud).

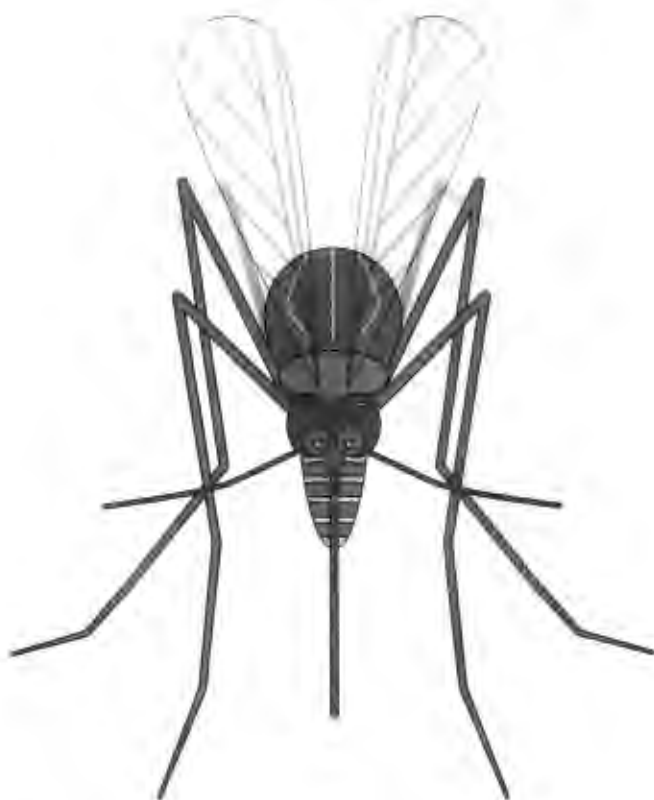


4.

Sit up tall and repeat the following affirmation:

I AM CALM.

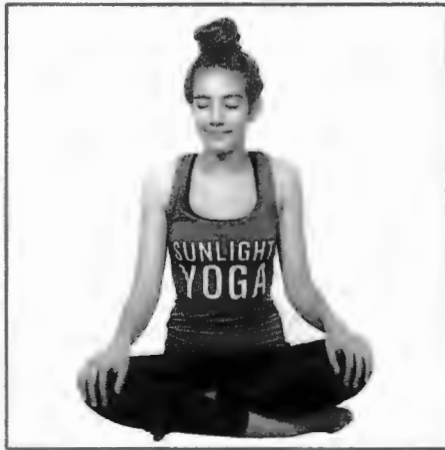
Mosquito Breath



Teacher:

It is important to include a breathing exercise at the start of every yoga routine. To be successful with yoga, you need to be able to control your breathing. This enables you to connect your body and your mind. Mosquitos are flying insects that are very common in the estuarine environment. They buzz in your ears and leave you with itchy, red bites. We want to mimic the buzzing noise that mosquitos make to practice our controlled yoga breathing. So, first think about the sound a mosquito makes in your head.

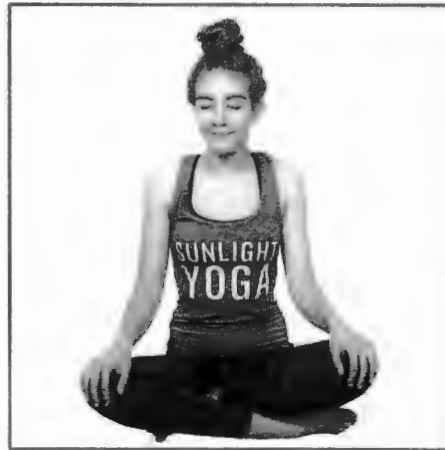
Let's practice making our own mosquito breath now!



1.

Start in calm water pose. Mosquitos make a buzzing sound, so close your eyes and take a deep breath.

When you exhale, making a humming sound.



2.

When you run out of air, take another breath and repeat. Practice this a few times:

deep breath and gentle hum...
deep breath and gentle hum.



3.

Keep your face relaxed and feel the vibration. Repeat 4-6 times.

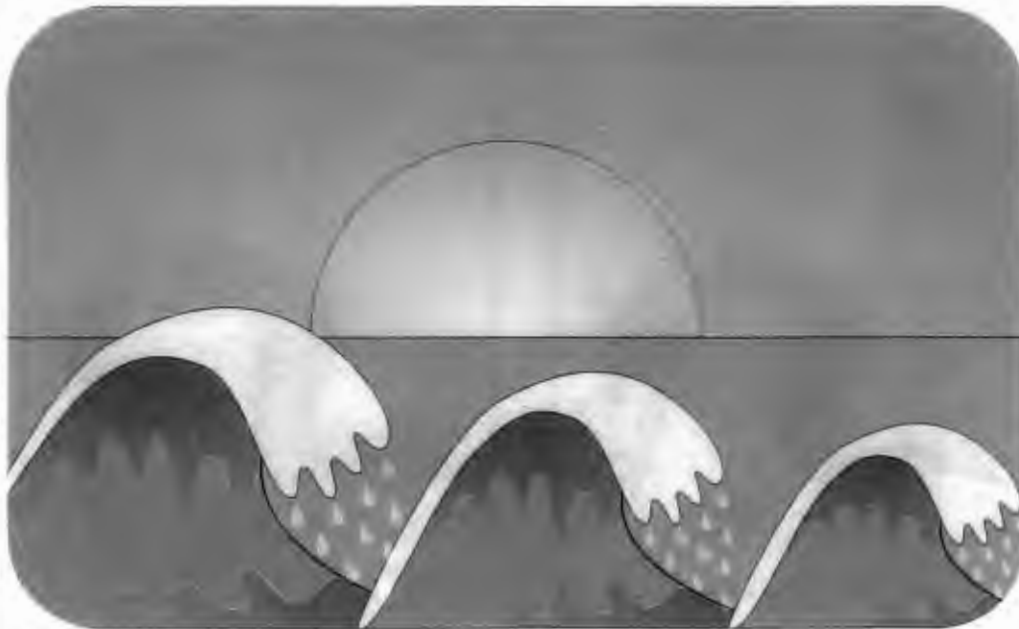


4.

Breathe normally. Repeat the following affirmation:

I AM CONNECTED.

Waves of Water Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Let's begin to warm up our body by becoming waves of water in the estuary. Some waves are created by the wind, while other waves are generated by boats motoring through the water.

Regardless of how created, all waves have a highest point called the crest and a lowest point called the trough.

Let's become waves of water with both crests and troughs now!



1.

Come to an all-fours position by kneeling with your knees directly below your hips, your arms straight and centered below your shoulders and your hands flat on the ground.



2.

Lift your head and tail bone, and look up toward the sky (trough pose).



3.

Lower your chin to your chest and arch your back like a scared cat (crest pose). Now, move back and forth like waves of water. Repeat 4-6 times.



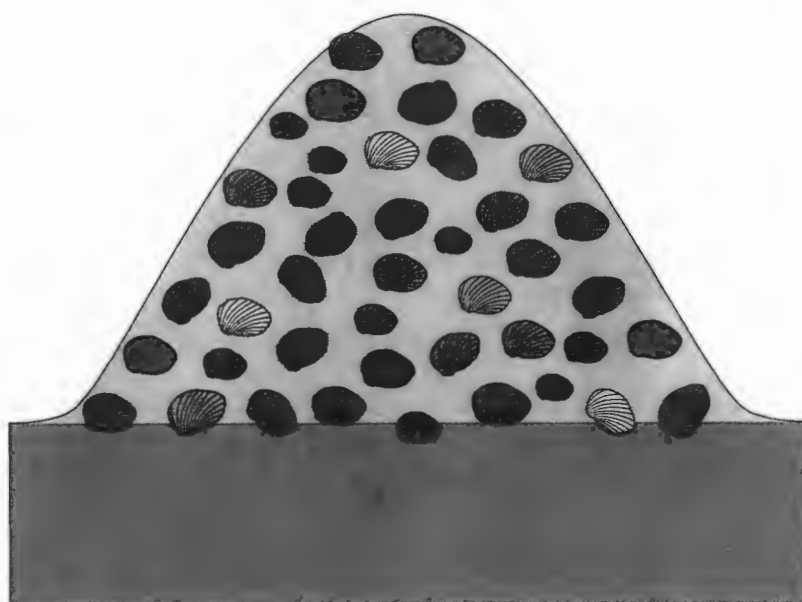
4.

Before leaving the pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I FLOW FREELY.

Return to calm water pose.

Shell Midden Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Now that we are calm and have our breathing under control, we need to stretch our bodies to be as tall as possible. We do this by performing shell midden pose. Shell middens were made by Native Americans hundreds to thousands of years ago. Native Americans placed all their empty oyster shells and other discarded items (animal bones, broken pottery, etc.) into large piles that we call middens. These were often the tallest areas along the shorelines of estuaries.

Let's become a shell midden now!



1.

Come to standing from calm water pose.



2.

Stand with your legs apart and arms by your sides.



3.

Place your feet together, turn the palms of your hands forward, and close your eyes. Stand tall and breathe slowly.



4.

Stand tall, open your eyes and look forward. Repeat the following affirmation:

I AM CONFIDENT.

Red Mangrove Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

You will find red mangrove trees along the shorelines of estuaries in areas where the water remains warm all year long. Mangroves cannot handle freezing weather. Red mangrove trees are easy to identify because they have roots above the water that reach out in all directions called prop roots. Prop roots help hold the tree in place on the shoreline.

Let's become a red mangrove tree now!



1.

Start in shell midden pose. Place your hands together in front of your heart. Look for a spot in front of you that does not move and keep your eyes on this spot. Breathe slowly.



2.

Place your right foot on the inside of your left thigh. Keep your gaze steady to help you balance. Press into your standing foot and raise your arms up over your head as branches for your mangrove tree. Stand tall and breathe.



3.

Reach your arms toward the ground as mangrove prop roots. Balance as long as possible and remember to breathe. Repeat on the other side.

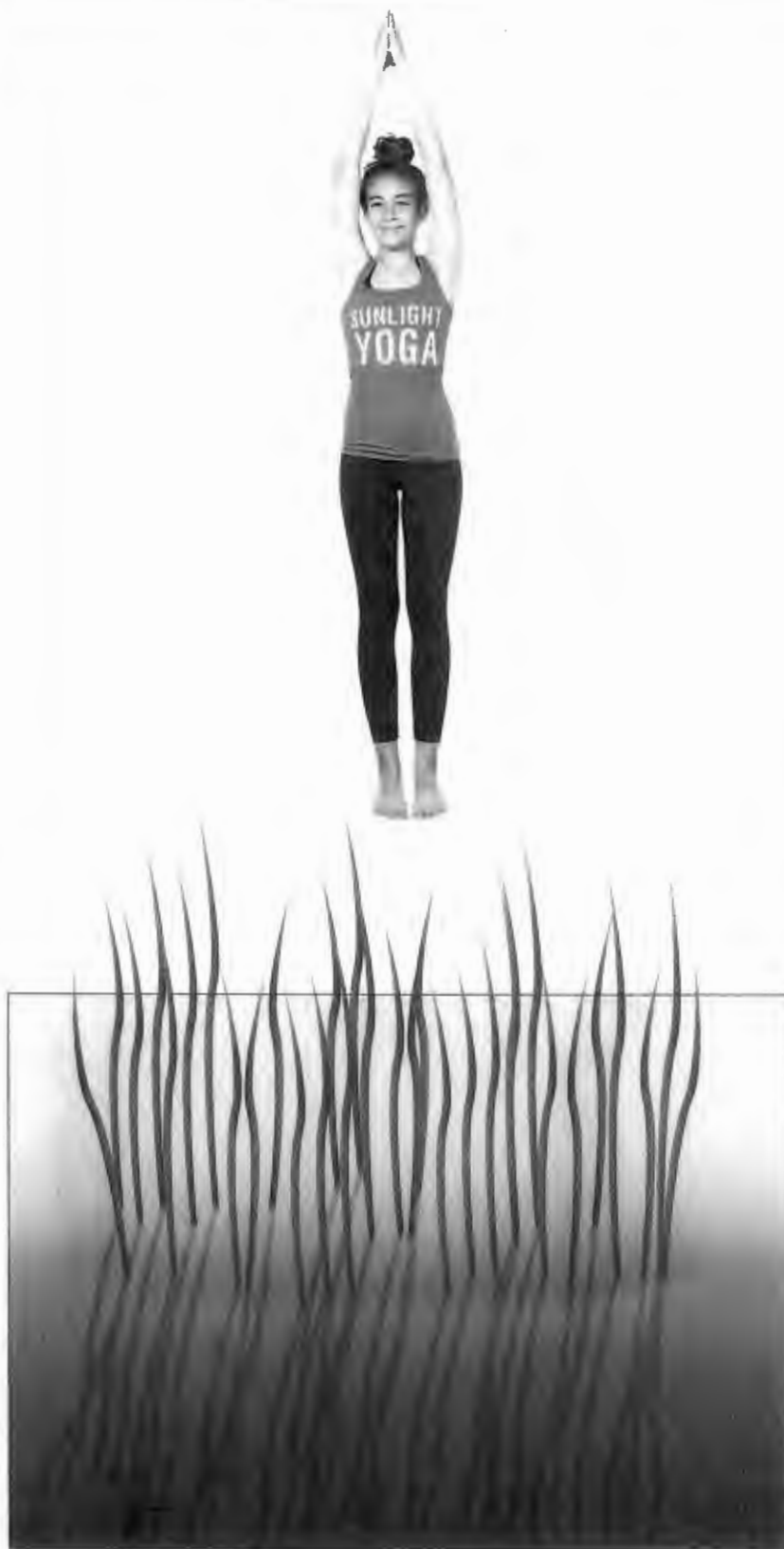


4.

Return to shell midden pose. Repeat the following affirmation:

I AM ROOTED.

Marshgrass Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Marshgrass is found on shorelines of estuaries, especially in areas where it is too cold for mangrove trees. Marshgrass roots hold mud in place on estuarine shorelines and provide hiding places for many crabs and snails.

Let's become marshgrass now!



1.
Come to standing in shell midden pose.



2.
Reach arms up to the sky
and place hands together.



3.
Lean your body to the left
and then to the right.
Repeat 4-6 times.

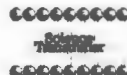
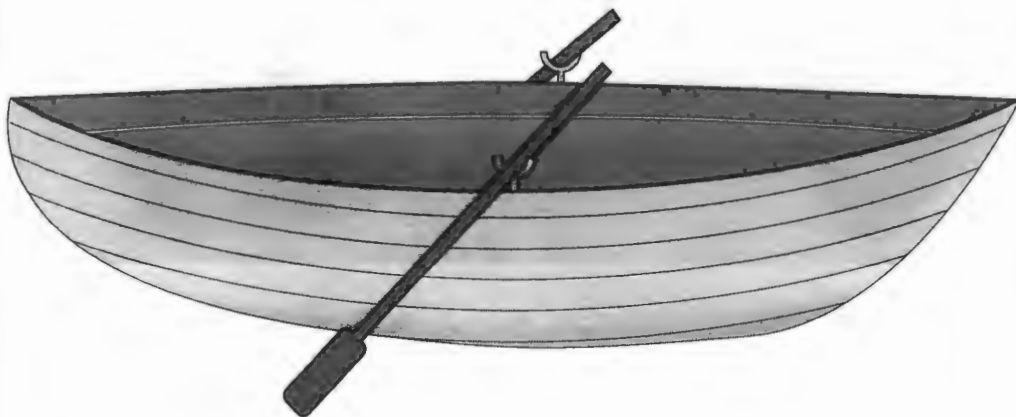


4.
While remaining in marshgrass pose,
repeat the following affirmation:

I AM FLEXIBLE.

Return to shell midden pose.

Boat Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Our boat journey in the estuary today will take us past beautiful mangrove trees and marshgrass meadows lining the shore and then out to an oyster reef in the middle of the estuary. In our estuary, the oyster reefs are under water at high tide and exposed at low tide. To be able to see the oyster reef, we need to plan our trip for low tide. Imagine your boat now - is it big or small? Fast or slow?

Let's become a boat now so we can travel out to the oyster reef!



1.
Start in calm water pose.



2.
Extend your legs, and bend your knees by placing your feet flat on the floor. Extend both of your arms forward.



3.
Lean back and lift your legs off the floor into boat pose. Try to balance and breathe while floating on the water. It is helpful to find a non-moving spot ahead of you and focus on it. Hold this pose for as long as you can. While still in boat pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM BALANCED.



4.
Return to calm water pose and repeat the following song:
**ON THE BOAT, OFF WE GO!
MAKE NO WAKE, GOING SLOW.
WHEN THE WAVES GENTLY SWAY,
THE OYSTERS HAVE A CHANCE TO STAY!**

Brown Pelican Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Brown pelicans are large birds that call estuaries their home. They are fun to watch as they soar on the wind, and then dive-bomb from the sky to catch an unsuspecting fish near the water's surface. After they crash-land, they drain the water from their large bill and swallow any fish they have captured.

Let's become a brown pelican now!



1.

Lie on your belly with forehead to the floor and arms by your sides.



2.

Reach arms out to a "T" and slowly lift your head and chest. Look forward.



3.

You are now a brown pelican soaring on the wind – lean to the left and then to the right. Repeat 4-6 times. To feed, scoop up water by puffing up your cheeks and pursing your lips. Hold your breath, swallow your fish, and then exhale.



4.

While in brown pelican pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I SOAR ON THE WIND.

Return to calm water pose.

Dolphin Pose



Teacher:

Dolphins are air-breathing mammals that are commonly found in estuaries. They communicate with each other through squeaks and whistles. Their favorite foods are fish and squid - both of which they swallow whole.

Let's become a dolphin now!



1.

Come to an all-fours position by kneeling with your knees directly below your hips, your arms straight and centered below your shoulders and your hands flat on the ground.



2.

Look up toward the sky.



3.

Come down on your forearms and tuck your toes under your feet. Lift your hips to the sky and relax your head.



4.

Push up on your toes and lift your hips to the sky. Make dolphin clicks and whistles, and, if desired, gulp down a passing fish. While remaining in pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM PLAYFUL.

Return to calm water pose.

Manatee Pose

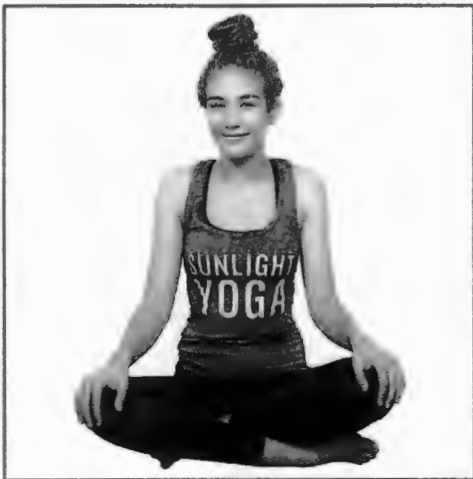


SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

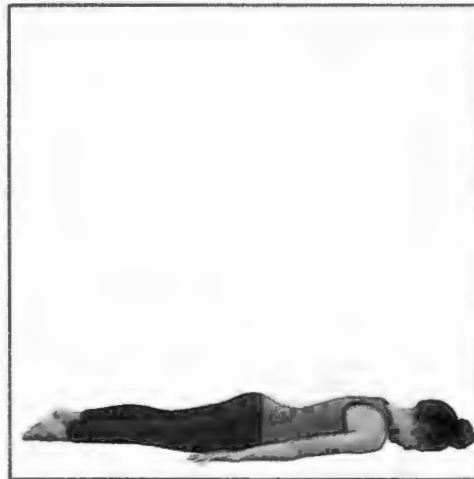
Manatees are large, marine mammals that can be found in fresh water and estuarine water. Each manatee can weigh up to 1200 pounds (544 kilograms). They consume seagrass, seaweed and mangrove leaves, needing to consume 10% of their body weight each day. Boaters need to be very careful not to hit manatees.

Let's become a manatee now!



1.

Start in calm water pose.



2.

Lie on your belly with your forehead to the floor and your arms by your sides.



3.

Bend your legs and reach your arms back to grab your feet to create a manatee tail. Take large breaths and rock back and forth. Chew seagrass like a cow chewing its cud.



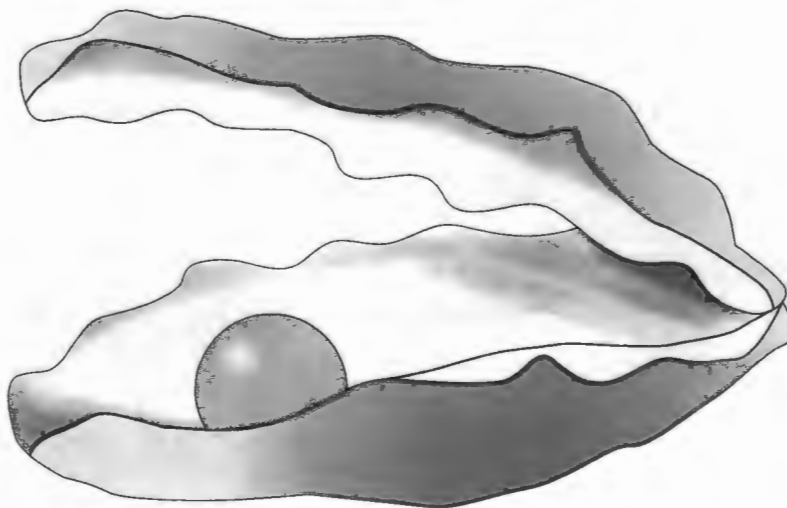
4.

When full, repeat the following affirmation:

I MOVE WITH GRACE.

Return to calm water pose.

Oyster Pose



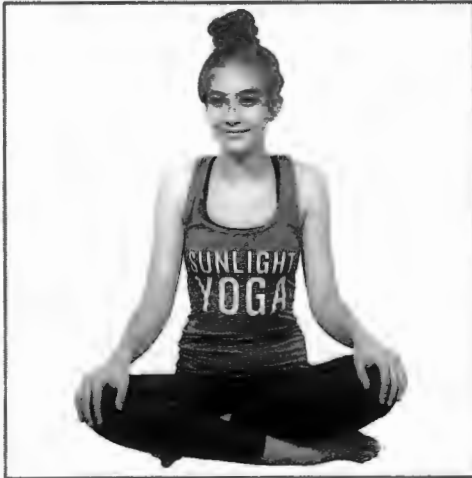
SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Our boats have traversed numerous crests and troughs, passing by mangroves and feeding pelicans, dolphin and manatees, and now we reach our destination - the oyster reef! Each oyster has 2 shells. These shells are closed tightly together at low tide to prevent the animal from drying out. At high tide, oysters are underwater and filter particles and chemicals from the water.

Oysters are considered by many to be the most important species in an estuary because of their ability to filter and clean a lot of water. It has been reported that a single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water each day. 50 gallons (189 liters) of water is about the amount of water needed to fill a bath tub!

Let's become an oyster now - we will alternate between being an open, feeding oyster at high tide and a closed oyster at low tide!



1.

Start in calm water pose.



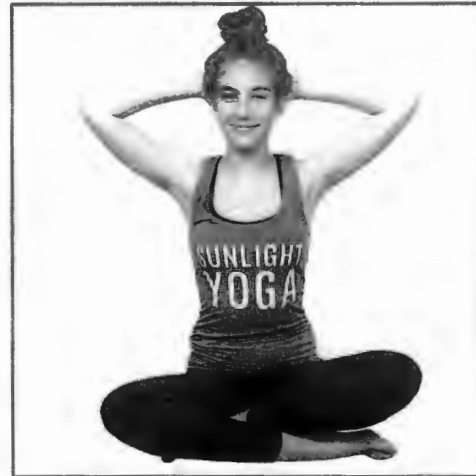
2.

To become an open oyster, interlace your fingers and place hands behind your head with your elbows open as wide as possible. Inhale deeply.



3.

To become a closed oyster, exhale and slowly fold your body forward over your legs. Next, inhale and become an open oyster. Repeat slowly 4-6 times.



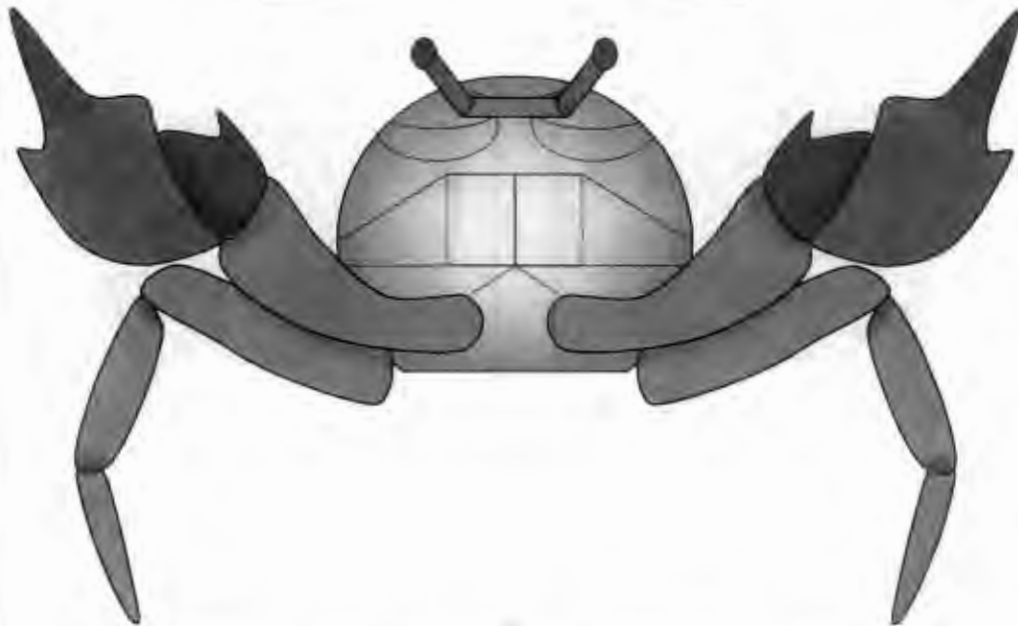
4.

While in open oyster pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM ONE WITH THE OYSTERS.

Return to calm water pose.

Crab Pose



Teacher:

Many species of crabs call oyster reefs their home. Some crabs are larger than a baseball, while others are smaller than a penny. You frequently see blue crabs, hermit crabs, mud crabs, and stone crabs on oyster reefs. Crabs often hide among oysters to avoid predators like fish and birds. Some crabs eat oysters by chipping away at the oyster's shells with their claws. Other crabs eat only the smallest oysters (commonly called spat) as their shells are easy to crush.

Let's become a crab on an oyster reef now!



1.

Start in shell midden pose.



2.

Separate your feet to be wider than your hips. Turn your toes out and heels in.



3.

Lower your hips and come into a squat. Make your hands into claws and lean from side to side as you crab walk looking for an oyster to eat.



4.

While remaining in crab pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM STRONG.

Return to shell midden pose.

Great Blue Heron Pose



SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Great blue heron stand over 2 feet (0.6 meters) tall and are often seen on the edges of oyster reefs looking for their next meal. These birds are skillful hunters, watching the water for any movement. When they see something moving in the water, they strike quickly with their long, narrow bills. When caught, they swallow their prey whole.

Let's become a great blue heron now!



1.
Start in shell midden pose.



2.
Place your right foot behind you and place your hands together in front of your heart. You can look for a non-moving spot in front of you to help you balance.



3.
Place your hands on your hips, lift your back leg up, lean forward and balance. Be as still and steady as possible like a great blue heron looking for lunch. Repeat on your other side.



4.
While remaining in great blue heron pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM STEADY.

Return to shell midden pose.

Seagrass Pose



Teacher:

Numerous species of bright green seagrass are present in estuaries around the globe. Seagrass moves back and forth with every wave. Seagrass is often used as an indicator of estuarine health because this plant needs clear water to grow. Water clarity is the term scientists use to describe how deep into the water they can see.

Let's become waving seagrass now!



1.
Start in shell midden pose.



2.
Separate your feet to a comfortable position. Gently fold forward at your waist allowing your arms to hang down toward your toes.



3.
Grab your opposite elbows with your hands with your chin tucked in toward your chest. Sway like seagrass in the waves by slightly bending one knee and then the other.



4.
Release elbows and roll up into shell midden pose. Repeat the following affirmation:

I PROVIDE CLARITY.

Shrimp Pose



Teacher:

Shrimp are fast-swimming crustaceans that average 6 inches (15 centimeters) in length. Shrimp have 10 thin legs, 2 pair of antennae for sensing the environment, and 2 eyes on stalks. Thousands of species of shrimp exist and can be found in our oceans, freshwater, and estuaries. Shrimp are a favorite food of fishes and humans.

Let's become a shrimp now!



1.
Start in shell midden pose.



2.
Extend your arms forward and bend both arms so your fingers are pointing toward the sky. Cross your right arm under your left arm. Look for a non-moving spot in front of you to help you balance.



3.
With your hands touching, make fists with both. Cross your right thigh over your left thigh and sink your hips as if you are sitting in a chair. Rotate your fists as they are your shrimp eyes on stalks looking out for predators. Repeat on the other side.

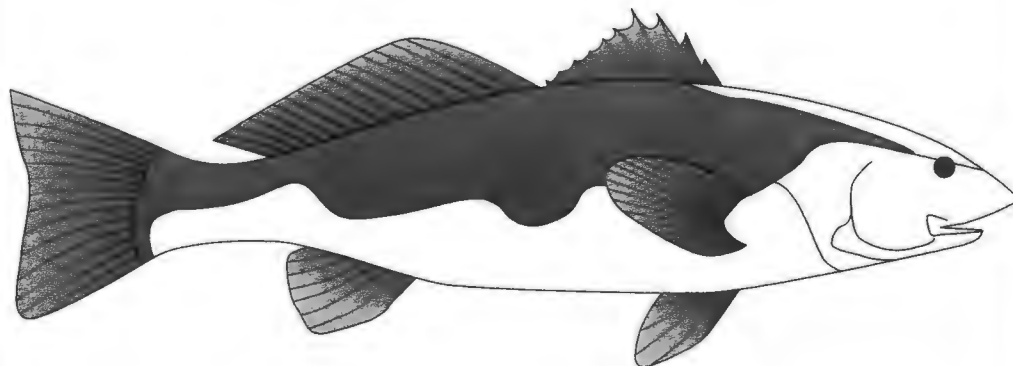


4.
While remaining in shrimp pose, repeat the following affirmation:

I AM SALTY.

Return to shell midden pose.

Redfish Pose



Teacher:

Redfish are also called red drum. They can live to be over 40 years old in estuaries, never moving very far from where they were born. Redfish can reach over 45 inches (114 centimeters) in length and weigh over 50 pounds (23 kilograms). They are a prize fish for catching because they put up a fight when hooked and taste really good.

Let's become a redfish now!



1.

Lie on your back with your legs together and your arms straight by your sides.



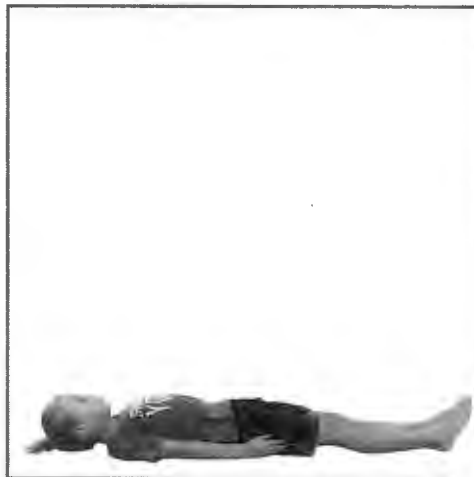
2.

Tuck your hands under your bottom with palms facing down. Lift your head and look at your feet.



3.

Bend your elbows, puff up your chest, gently arch your back, and look behind you. Place your bottom lip over your top lip and breathe deeply like a redfish watching a lure on a fish hook.



4.

Gently lift your head and return to lying on your back with your arms by your sides.

Repeat the following affirmation:

I AM MIGHTY.

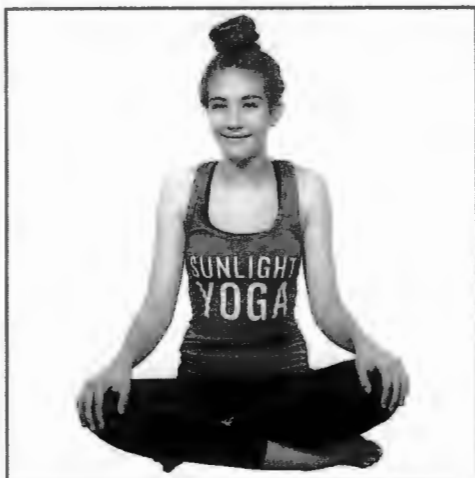
Bullshark Pose



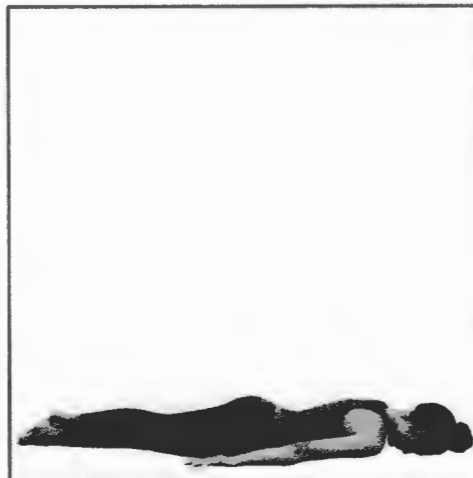
Teacher:

Bull sharks are top predators and consume fish and other sharks. They are large and aggressive, with a maximum size around 11 feet (3.4 meters) long. Bull sharks swim between freshwater and saltwater with ease and give birth to baby sharks in estuaries.

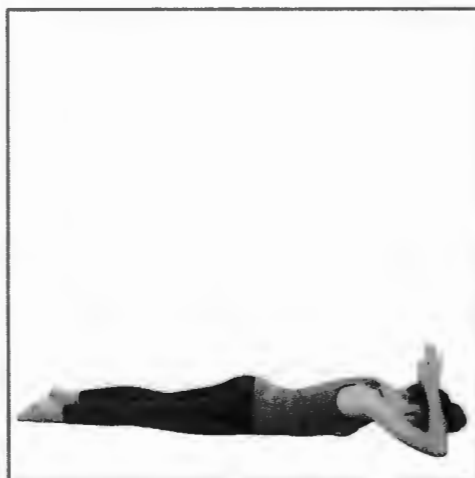
Let's become a bull shark now!



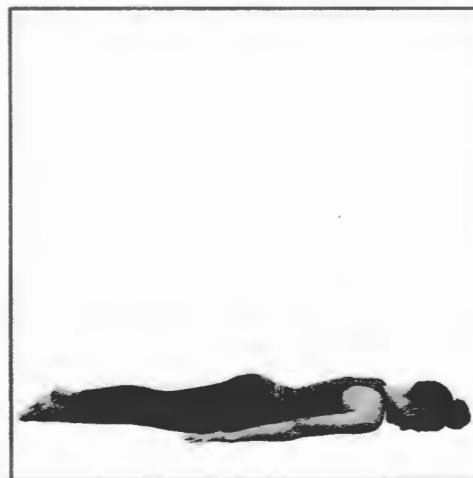
1.
Start in calm water pose.



2.
Lie on your belly with your forehead to the floor and your arms by your sides.



3.
Reach your arms straight in front of you so they touch your ears. Bend your elbows and place your hands together above your head to create your dorsal fin. Inhale to lift your chest and sway from side to side like a shark secretly looking for its next meal.

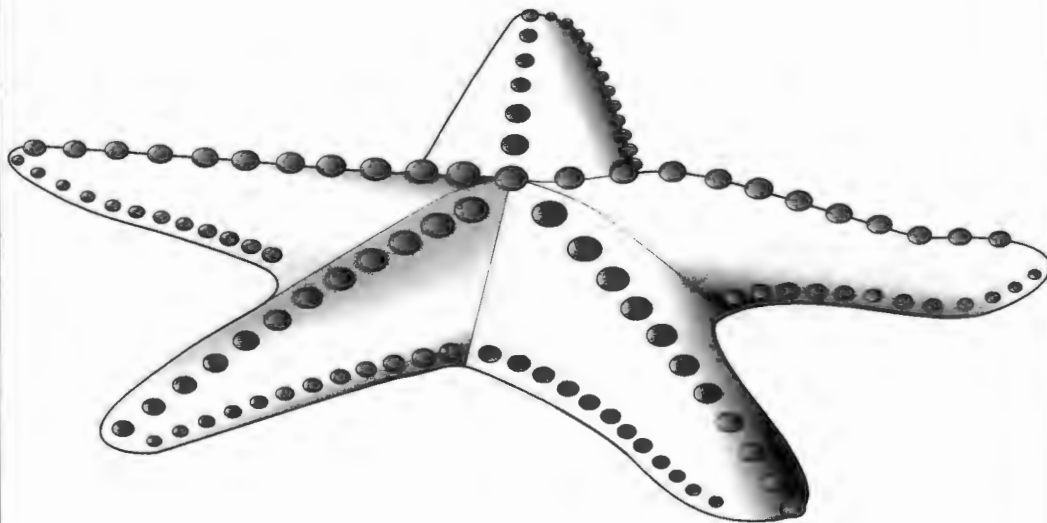


4.
While remaining in bull shark pose, whisper the following affirmation:

I MOVE QUIETLY.

Relax your body and bring your arms back to your sides.

Sleeping Starfish Pose

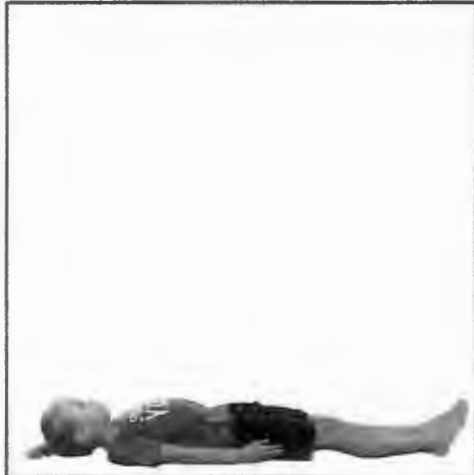


SUNLIGHT
YOGA

Teacher:

Every yoga routine ends with a pose in which you lie on your back and think about how your body feels. We will also think about how important oysters and estuaries are to our planet. We will lie still like a resting starfish. Starfish are a favorite animal with many arms. Stretch your arms and legs out to look like a star and relax.

Let's become sleeping starfish now!



1.
Lie on your back with your arms
to your sides.



2.
Reach your arms out into a "T" position.
Spread your legs wide moving into
your starfish position.



3.
Close your eyes and repeat
the following affirmation:

I AM RELAXED.



4.
Remain in this position for approximately
5 minutes of guided mediation.
Teacher: In a calming voice, use imagery
to remind your students of all
the amazing biodiversity in the estuary
and how important all species
are for our planet.